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93RD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Mister Chair and fellow Members,

Thank you for having a public hearing on this important legislation. As the Assembly author, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to explain the merits of Assembly Bill 276 to you today.

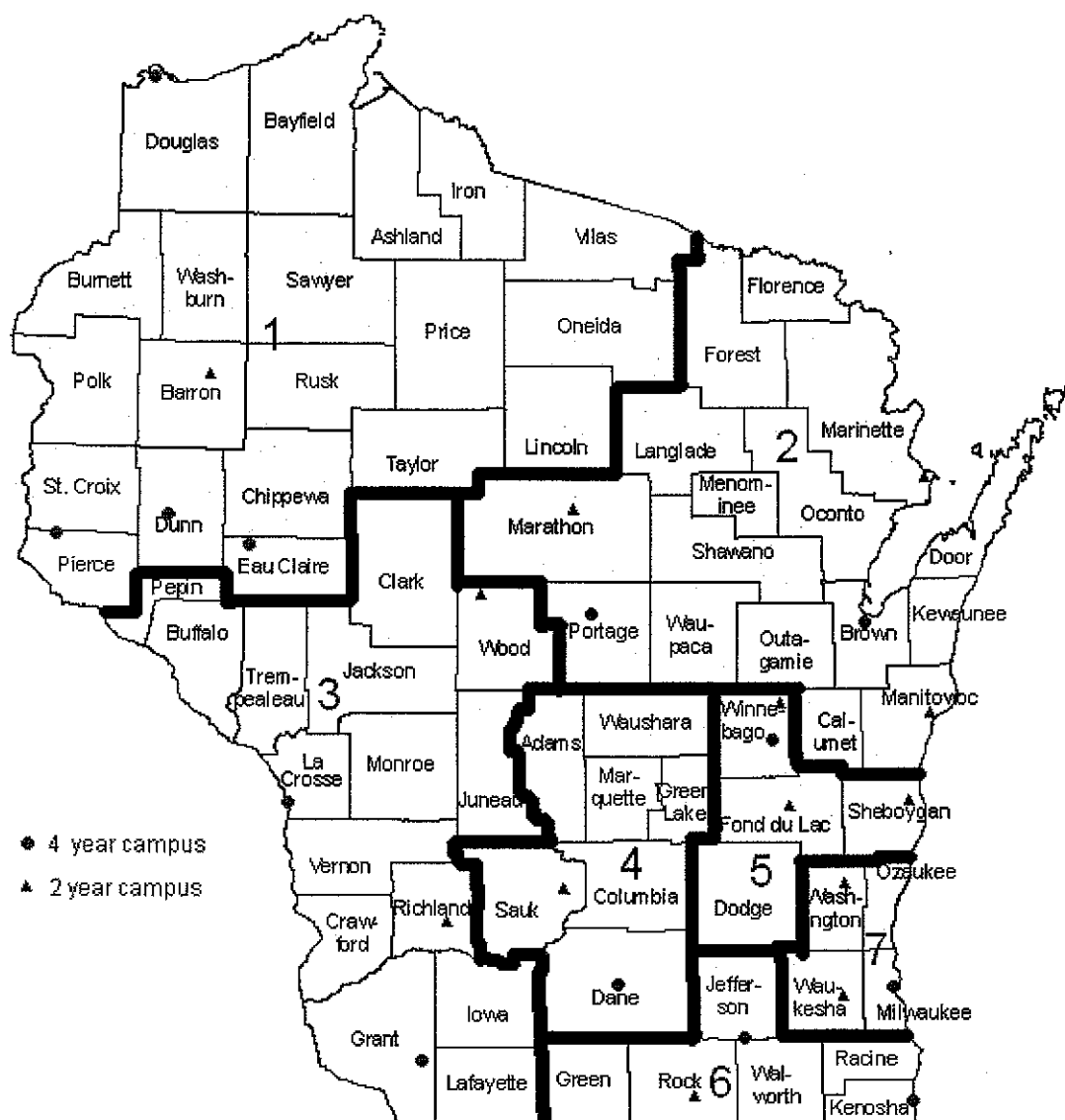
AB 276 is intended to provide regional diversity to the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents. This bill proposes to create 7 regional districts with at least one member of the Board residing in each district. The bill divides each district along county lines and factors in the number of 4 and 2 year institutions that are located in each district. The goal of this bill is to set very broad parameters that will not severely limit or impact the governor's ability to make suitable appointments. Instead, this bill stays with the current system of appointments but allows that each region of the state have a voice.

The reason that there are 7 districts is simply because it is half of the total number of citizen members of the Board. Past versions of this bill required that there be a Regent from every congressional district. However, because of the inevitable changes to both the number and lines of congressional districts every 10 years after the census is taken, this bill does not use congressional districts. Setting the number at 7 and drawing permanent lines is a simple but effective way of ensuring all regions of the state are represented.

As it is made up right now, 7 of the 14 members of the Board are from Milwaukee County and 3 are from Dane County. According to US Census Bureau, just over 25% of Wisconsin residents live in these two counties. Even though just over a quarter of Wisconsin's residents live in Milwaukee and Dane Counties, almost three quarters of the Board's citizen members are from just these two counties. This leaves very few to represent the rest of the state. While I understand the important role that Milwaukee and Madison play in our state's economy and the impact that these two areas have on the rest of the state, it seems highly disproportionate for these areas to have such high levels of direct representation on the Board.

Everyone on this committee knows the impact the various UW System campuses have on their surrounding communities. In that vein, it seems fair that areas of the state who certainly feel the impact of decisions made by the Board have representation on the Board. I certainly do not think that the Board of Regents should be an elected body and surely not a political one.

Once again, thank you for your consideration of AB 276. I look forward to your support of this bill that will help further the Wisconsin Idea.





# JULIE LASSA

## STATE SENATOR

Assembly Bill 276  
Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities  
Wednesday, July 8<sup>th</sup>  
10 am  
GAR

Chairman Hixon and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on Assembly Bill 276, which will bring much-needed regional representation to the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents. I am pleased to be lead Senate author of this bill, as well as the author of the Senate companion bill, SB 223. Both bills direct that, beginning in 2015, at least one member of the Board of Regents reside in each of seven geographical regions throughout the state. These regions have been drawn so that each contains a balance of UW two and four-year campuses. It will ensure that this body, which is responsible for governing the entire UW system and naming its chancellors and deans, will have at least one member that will be responsible for representing the needs and interests of each of its campuses.

The current makeup of the Board of Regents illustrates the need for this provision. Of the 18 current Regents, eleven—fully 61 percent—reside in either Dane or Milwaukee County. One regent each resides near two of our major campuses, La Crosse and Parkside. No regent currently resides near either Parkside or Whitewater, and the northwest quadrant of the state, home to four four-year campuses—Superior, Eau Claire, Stout and River Falls—does not have a single representative on the Board of Regents living anywhere within it.

I understand that, given the size and importance of UW Madison and UW Milwaukee, the critical mass of the system will always center on these campuses. But one of the best features of the UW System, and the one that makes it such a cornerstone of the culture and economy of the state, is that we have fine four and two-year campuses throughout the state. The geographical dispersion of these campuses permits the university to extend access to citizens in every geographical area of Wisconsin. Traditional students don't need to move far from home in order to receive a college education, and non-traditional students, including the many displaced workers who rely on the university to train them for new careers, can pursue higher education without disrupting their lives. This dispersion has also fostered a system in which each campus has developed its own specializations, its own personality, and its own unique relationship with the social and economic makeup of its community.

And, as we discuss the topic of brain drain, it is important to point out that students who graduate from the comprehensive campuses around the state are often much more likely to remain in Wisconsin – a testimony to the importance of place in the mission of the university system.

In short, the fact that the UW System reaches out to every corner of the state is one of the key characteristics that makes it a great university system. Since that geographical reach is so important to the system, it should be reflected in the makeup of the body that governs that system. This bill will ensure that each campus and every region of the state can look to at least one member of the board and know that that individual is charged with representing its interests on the Board of Regents.

Those of us who represent the various parts of the state that include UW System campuses other than Madison and Milwaukee have been concerned for years about the imbalance that exists in the allocation of state resources throughout the system. This bill will help to help bring balance to the Board of Regents, which will in turn help that body balance the needs of the entire system. Madison and Milwaukee are important to the economic health and future of this state, but the four- and two- year campuses that comprise the lion's share of the UW System are no less important. This legislation recognizes the tremendous impact an equally strong and unified system can have on the entire state's economy, and on the culture of its communities. I hope you will give it your support.